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**MEMORANDUM FOR:**

*2010/EA Correspondence*

Date

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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC# 02648-85

23 May 1985

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Carl W. Ford, Jr.  
National Intelligence Officer for East Asia

SUBJECT: US Influence and the Philippine Succession

1. At our last meeting you asked that I give more thought to the crucial issue of the Marcos Era drawing to a close, specifically, how the US might go about influencing Marcos to lay the ground work for a smooth succession. And indeed Marcos's departure either by death, retirement, or forcible removal is just around the corner. But he has not yet identified a successor. Moreover, the chaotic economic situation and the growing threat from communist insurgents promises to complicate the process even more. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] This memo presents six hypothetical options you may find useful in thinking about this question. I conclude with a discussion of three problems associated with viewing President Marcos as the principle agent of reform and protector of US interests in the Philippines.

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2. The options presented below are only illustrative of the range of possibilities available and not intended as an exhaustive, detailed examination of all alternatives. Although the options presented are not based on any preconceived notion or analysis of root causes of the problems today confronting the Philippines, one's views and changing circumstances of course will have an important influence on choosing a favored objective or course of action. For example, Options I-III presume Marcos to be an essential element of any solution while in options IV-V Marcos is seen as a large part of the problem; [REDACTED]

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Option I: Encouraging Marcos to Select a Highly  
Qualified Running Mate in 1987

Overview.

Marcos intends to run for reelection in 1987, but recognizes that the question of succession is vital to the future of the Philippines, his place in history, and the fate of his family. He also appreciates the stake America and the free world have in a strong and viable Philippines. Accordingly, he indicates an interest in identifying potential successors and grooming them for the day when he no longer will be around.

Objective.

The US would seek to persuade President Marcos that everyone's interests dictated that he take concrete steps to prepare for an orderly succession--preferably by selecting a running mate in 1987 best able to lead the Philippines through perilous times and protect the status and fortune of the Marcos family.

Strengths.

- takes Marcos at his word as a point of departure;
- plays on motivations believed important to Marcos, (e.g., the future of the Philippines, his place in history, the fate of his family);
- dovetails nicely with current US policy, i.e. "Marcos is part of the problem, but he is also part of the solution";
- better than even chance that Marcos will act on US suggestions;

Weaknesses.

- Marcos admits there is nobody on the scene currently who he considers a worthy successor and promises only to identify potential candidates to carry on;
- leaves details and timing of succession largely in Marcos's hands;
- assumes Marcos will choose a successor wisely;
- accepts a Marcos regime in the Philippines for the foreseeable future (there is a fifty percent chance he will live beyond 1987);

Option II: Encourage Marcos to Select a Specific Running Mate in 1987

Overview.

Same as Option I

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Objective.

The US would seek to persuade President Marcos to select a successor--Vice Presidential running mate--preferred by the US (either a specific individual or a list of possibilities to choose from).

Strengths. (Same as Option I plus)

- avoids Marcos seeing himself as the indispensable man and attempting to procrastinate on grounds that there is no one currently on the scene capable of replacing him.
- increases the likelihood of capable successor being named rather than simply a crony-loyalist

Weaknesses.

- Marcos more likely to resist efforts to micromanage;
- gives Mrs. Marcos advance notice that US opposes her succession and could precipitate a family power grab in the event of presidential incapacitation;
- essentially limits succession to one of several current KBL leaders or possibly a current military leader turned civilian politician.

Option III: Insist Marcos Pursue Option I or Option IIOverview.

Same as Option I and II.

Objective.

The US would insist that Marcos take concrete steps (exert maximum pressure) to select a successor (Vice Presidential candidate) prior to the 1987 elections. This could be combined with either Option I (Marcos selects) or II (US selects).

Strengths. (Same as Option I and II plus)

- insures Marcos understands that the US views the situation in the Philippines with great concern and places a high priority on a stable succession;
- takes account of the short time frame available before the 1987 elections, i.e. attempts to exert maximum pressure on Marcos to prepare for an orderly succession.

Weaknesses. (Same as Option I and II except)

- entails greater risk of Marcos resisting US pressures;
- requires backup plan if Marcos refuses to accede to US wishes.

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Option IV: Encourage Marcos Not to Run For Reelection in  
1987 and Instead Choose a Successor to be the KBL Standard Bearer

Overview. (Same as Option I-III plus)

President Marcos has lost much of his credibility over the past two years with both members of his own party--the KBL--and the moderate opposition. Much of his grassroots support--historically one of his greatest strengths--also seems to have eroded substantially. Many increasingly believe Marcos would have a difficult time winning a "free and fair" election, but fully expect him to rig the results flagrantly if necessary to insure a victory. Such tactics, they believe, would dangerously polarize the society with an accompanying loss of confidence in constitutional procedures. Observers on the scene also increasingly doubt if the Marcos government has the ability or the will to institute basic, fundamental political, military and economic reform, and believe this dangerously aggravates an already serious situation and risks the communist insurgents obtaining even more popular support.

Objective.

The US would encourage Marcos to announce his retirement and name a successor to be the KBL's standard bearer in the 1987 election.

Strengths.

- facilitates a transfer of power from Marcos to a successor in 1987;
- transfer occurs essentially through established constitutional procedures, i.e. 1987 elections;
- Marcos stepping down increases likelihood of Congress and American people supporting expanded assistance to the Philippines;
- improves chances of fundamental reform including implementation of counterinsurgency program.

Weaknesses.

- requires maximum US pressure to overcome Marcos's almost certain objections;
- runs the risk of Marcos backlash;
- does not eliminate possibility of fraudulent elections and weak or ineffectual successor government;
- "free and fair" elections, on the other hand, could result in relatively unfriendly successor government.

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Option V: Insist that Marcos Not Run for Reelection in 1987 and  
Instead Choose a Successor to be the KBL Standard Bearer

Overview. (Same as Option I-IV)

Objective.

The US would insist that Marcos announce his retirement and name a successor to be the KBL's standard bearer in the 1987 election.

Strengths.

- facilitates a transfer of power from Marcos to a successor in 1987;
- transfer occurs essentially through established constitutional procedures, i.e. 1987 elections.
- Marcos stepping down increases likelihood of Congress and American people supporting expanded assistance to the Philippines;
- improves chances of fundamental reform including implementation of counterinsurgency program.

Weaknesses.

- requires maximum US pressure to overcome Marcos's almost certain objections;
- runs the risk of Marcos backlash;
- does not eliminate possibility of fraudulent elections and weak or ineffectual successor government;
- "free and fair" elections, on the other hand, could result in relatively unfriendly successor government.

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3. In addition to the question of influencing the succession, the US hopes to prod President Marcos into making fundamental political, economic and military reforms. US policy, for example, explicitly assumes that while Marcos is part of the problem he is also part of the solution. Therefore, successful reform, as in the case of Marcos choosing a successor, depends to a large extent on what the President is willing and/or capable of doing to initiate changes. But many in the intelligence community believe that the prospects are bleak on both counts. A growing body of evidence suggests that President Marcos is neither willing nor able to institute essential reforms. The package of reforms, for example, the US is insisting upon, if implemented, would dismantle the power structure Marcos has created and undermine his own hold on power. It appears unrealistic to ask the President to purge the military of corruption and abuses, for example, when those tossed out would largely be those most loyal to him personally. The same is true for straightening out the economic mess. Many also believe Marcos will have trouble being returned to office in the "free and fair" election we are calling for.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Most important, it suggests that Marcos has chosen an approach to the insurgency with serious flaws. Even a Marcos in his prime would have difficulty implementing such a micro-managaged program--requiring presidential decision making on all aspects of the program and regional (decentralized) implementation--on a sustained basis. But Marcos is not in his prime and [REDACTED] he will have regularly reoccurring health problems for the foreseeable future. Accordingly, the prospects for such a plan to succeed are doubtful.

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Marcos appears to be relying heavily on his past solutions to problems as answers for today's troubles. [REDACTED] taking personal charge, is very similar to the way he handled the NPA in the late 1960s and the Moro rebellion in the 1970s. In these instances, however, Marcos's health was not a factor and the problems were essentially regional rather than national in scope. He could afford to concentrate his resources in a relatively small area until the problem had been resolved. Unfortunately, the current insurgency differs substantially from these earlier examples in that it has broken the regional mold and has spread throughout all major islands. The earlier approach just is not suited for an insurgency of such wide scope and intensity.

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He also seems very conscious of what delegating more authority to his ministers could mean for his own position. As a student of history he remembers clearly President Quirino's fate once Magsaysay had pacified the Huks in the 1950s. He appears intent on protecting his own rule even if it means a less effective counterinsurgency program.

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Again Marcos appears to have chosen an approach he used successfully against the NPA and the Moros earlier in his career. In both cases he relied heavily on concerted military pressures followed up by economic and other programs. In this instance, however, he has chosen to disregard reality and the advice most of his senior advisors are giving him.

All objective observers hold that the military equation is far different today than when Marcos first confronted the NPA in the late 60s and early 70s--the AFP's capability has deteriorated while the insurgent's military power has increased. Few believe that a military solution in such circumstances, without reforms and a substantial upgrading of the AFP, can succeed.

Moreover, all of Marcos's defense advisors advocate a coordinated civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] the first essential step in any successful counterinsurgency strategy is to "win back the support of the people" in the contested areas [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] through political, economic, and military programs.

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Only then can you stop the spread of the insurgency and begin to concentrate on the areas already lost. Many others I am sure would agree

[REDACTED] They also probably recognize that relying primarily on "clearing operations", unless it can be done swiftly and cleanly, invites further polarization of the society and more not less sympathy and support for the insurgents.

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*Carl W. Ford, Jr.*  
Carl W. Ford, Jr.

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